

[HD: The Laotian] population is composed of varied elements, in which the Laotians, who are a T'ai people, and Kha--the name given by the Laotians to the Indonesian populations--predominate. (1) It is dispersed in hamlets, each mustering a few

1. L'Annuaire Statistique de l'Indochine (Hanoi, Ideo, 1937) gives 665,000 T'ai and 247,000 Indonesians.

dwellings and a few dozen inhabitants.

5: Brodrick--198

S-3

(1939) 1942

116, 101, 563

Laotians

Ethnic subgroups

"There are plenty of possible 'sites' over the other side of the frontier into Laos, for the Laotians are scattered and few. Their rude statues of the Enlightened One, all features and no face, have not invaded many of the anfractuositities in the hills of the country that they hardly own, so full is it of 'Khas', that is, 'wild men', or Moi."

6: Goudal--5

S-3

(1934) 1938

Laotians-1-4

116, 101, 161, 141, 463, 177.65

France

636.65

"The Tai are of Mongolian race. They came from China and formed various groups, including the Laotians (and the Siamese) and the predominant ethnical group in Upper Tonking. Their numbers are assessed at a million. They are of less than average height (1.59 metres). As a people they are very gay and hospitable. Like the Cambodians, the Laotians are Buddhists, but their religious sense goes hand in hand with very great moral freedom. They are indifferent farmers but engage frequently in fishing and hunting and are excellent boatmen. As traders they possess remarkable qualities.

For a long time the Laotian was considered as an apathetic creature, hating all effort and anxious only to enjoy the present without worrying about the morrow or without trying to improve his moral well-being or his material existence by persevering labour. It cannot be denied that this people, whose country was repeatedly laid waste throughout the centuries by invasions from the north and the west, seemed at the time of our arrival in Indo-China to be doomed to decadence. . . At the present time the country has roads and tracks, and its doors are open to commercial and industrial undertakings which have already done much for the development of the land and its mineral wealth. The local authorities have no difficulty in securing the very active co-operation of the inhabitants in the construction of roads and tracks. . . The legend

of the Laotian as an idle creature, exercising passive resistance to any attempt to make use of his intelligence or his physical labour, had disappeared. Far from taking no interest in public welfare as was long asserted, the Laotians on the contrary seem to take a lively interest in it, and in particular in the progress of the development of the country and of the schools and medical institutions that are being established. (2)

2. Léon Archimbaud: Rapport au nom de la Commission des finances sur le budget général des Colonies (1928), pp. 88-89.

This point of view is confirmed by the following statement:

'It has been repeatedly alleged that the Laotian abhors work and does only what is strictly necessary to provide for his own needs and for those of his family. He is said to have two serious defects: a very idle mind and a hatred of effort. This view is mistaken. It is certainly true that there is a certain fundamental apathy and indolence about the Laotian but this can be quite naturally explained by his background and the circumstances

in which his material existence has so far been passed.

'Times have now changed, the country is entirely pacified and war and piracy are merely a memory. . . . Exports of raw materials which were practically non-existent a mere 15 years ago are now increasing rapidly and this is clearly proof that the Laotian worker is not, as has been said, indifferent to gain, but that he can collaborate effectively with the settlers.

'The whole question is one of making use of his services in a manner suited to his special mentality, customs, qualities and defects. It is essential to treat him fairly and kindly; his intelligence and his docility of character enable him to adapt himself gradually to modern working methods. The tin mines in the province of Cammon have for several years been employing Laotian workers who have proved completely satisfactory both for mining the ore and for its treatment.

'Similarly, in connection with road making, in Upper and Lower Laos groups of workers have been used for cutting down

6: Goudal--5

S-3

(1934) 1938

Laotians-4

116, 101, 161, 141, 463, 177.65

France

636.65

trees and clearing away stumps and undergrowth in the heart of a mountainous country where conditions of work are difficult and resources are slight. Under the skilful direction of our administrators and engineers the use of Laotian labour has proved satisfactory in almost every case.' (M. Bosc: Rapport d'ensemble sur le Laos. Conference on Native Communities held at the International Colonial Exhibition, Paris, 1931.) "

7: Thompson--371 [2]

J-4

(no date) 1937

Laotians

116, 101, 174, 621

"The origin of the Laotian people is the object of much speculation. In all probability they were driven southward from Thibet and China in successive waves. They were and are to-day governed by petty chieftains and divided into families, each of which forms a community under the authority of the eldest son of its most ancient branch."

7: Thompson--363

J-4

(no date) 1937

Laotians

116, 101, 131, 621

"Laos is a ribbon of a country stretching from Cambodia to the Yunnanese frontier, and entirely dominated by the Mekong River. That great waterway is so imperfect a means of communication that the geographic diversity of the country and its peoples has free rein. Laos is covered with muongs or totally independent village groups. They have only been united under either a powerful neighbouring state like Siam or Cambodia, or when the two strongest among them--the principalities of Luang-Prabang and Vientiane--had kings energetic enough to achieve a confederation."

10: d'Orleans--275-276
116, 101, 173, 197, 563

T-3

(1891-92) 1894

Laos

Ethnic subgroups

"They [LSS: Kha boatmen, in the service of a Laotian.] are easily recognised as Laotians, but they appear inferior and weaker, though they are lively and prepossessing; they originally came from Ban Lasa (near Muong Ngot), but they call themselves Khamouks, and count seven principal tribes of Kas; but their dialects differ, so that several of them cannot understand each other.

The Kasings (whose language approaches that of the Yaos).

The Khakos.

The Khabits. [276]

The Khakoos.

The Kahoks (who wear cotton drawers as their only garment).

The Khapafs.

The Khamouks.

They say that they do not know anything of their history, but add: that the Laotians are their brothers, therefore the Kas had compassion upon them and retired to the mountains, leaving the plain and the young shoots of bamboo to them. "

10: d'Orleans--302

T-3

(1891-92) 1894

Laos

116, 101, 162, 563

"The inhabitants [LSS: of Luang Prabang] are Kas, Laotians, Lus and Meos, while there are also a few Chinese traders and shopkeepers. The Kas, divided into seven tribes, according to the information obtained by Holt, Hallett and Neis, are four times more numerous than the Laotians."

10: d'Orleans--316-319

T-3

(1891-92) 1894

Laos

116, 101, 173, 197, 771, 563

Ethnic subgroups

"The Meos live upon the eastern frontier of the kingdom, close to the Pouons plateau. I never met any in the town, but I had an opportunity of [pages 317 and 318 contain illustration] [319] conversing with one who was employed by M. Counillon, the French consul. He was a man of small stature, but well proportioned, with very pale complexion and regular features, and he told me that the Meos originally came from China and could make themselves understood by the caravan-men from the Yunnan. I gathered from his expressions that the Meos dialect is very like that of Van Bou, the word Meos, being rather the Laos designation, while they call themselves Mongs. I do not know whether this name has any connection with that of the ancient empire of the Mongs and the Möns of Burmah, but, according to the man with whom I conversed, the tribes to which he belongs have no religious creeds, though there is a word in his language which denotes the Deity."

23: Franck--270-271
H6, 101, 291, 301, 481

T-2

(1924) 1926

Laotians -1-2
Ethnic subgroup

"I had known the Miao, or, as the French call them, the Méo, in southwestern China, though there my acquaintance had been mainly with the 'Flowery Miao' in their extravagantly colorful dress. These were 'Black Miao', a much more independent tribe, and with almost no color in their black or dark-blue garments, sometimes set off by a dull red or purplish wine-colored scarf about the waist. Both men and women, often riding on horses, were a wilder tawnier type than their flowery relatives, their sturdy independence as plainly to be seen as their bare feet; for none of them, of either sex, had ever tortured their feet with shoes. Their sunburned hair and eyes were more nearly brown than black, and both sexes wore the hair long. Most of the men had carelessly wound turbans of dark cloth, a few of them wore Chinese skullcaps and dressed their hair Chinese fashion, old Chinese fashion, more exactly, for the majority still had queues, often hanging unbraided loosely about their shoulders. Another custom among these sturdy mountaineers is the wearing about their necks of heavy silver rings of all shapes. These are evidently concerned with their tribal superstitions as well as being their idea of combining adornment with safe banking. All silver money that falls into their hands is turned into rings; men, women, even the children, all wear them, large and small, from mere twisted silver wire to veritable horse-collars, some with open ends, some fastened with silver padlocks. Sometimes there are as many as half a dozen on a single neck, even of men on their way to work in the jungle. The richest

23: Franck--270-271
116, 101, 291, 301, 481

T-2 (1924) 1926

Laotians-2
Ethnic subgroup

of them clanked like perambulating pawnshops whenever they moved.

A critical observer might have wondered why they do not spend for shirting some of the silver dollars they turn into neck-rings. For the men wear a shirt or jacket that covers [271] everything except what a shirt is most expected to cover, leaving bare a foot or more of the waist, with the navel as its central point of departure. But to every race its own ideas. The girls are not prudish, yet not at all forward. For their jackets, open almost to the navel and giving frequent half-glimpses of the breasts, were plainly designed for comfort rather than coquetry, as were their plaid skirts reaching hardly to their bare knees. The women walk with a powerful yet not ungraceful swing of the hips and a saucy flirting of their short pleated skirts, of which they are perhaps quite unconscious. Some of the men wear the tatooed blue panties ending in ruffles just below the knees that are common in Laos and the Shan States, but this is evidently due to extratribal influence, just as are the flowered silk gowns a few of the well-to-do among them wear after the fashion of the Chinese. "

23: Franck--302 [2]

T-2

(1924) 1926

Laotians

116, 101, 161, 634

"Laos has eight divisions, of which Luang Prabang is the largest and the only one still boasting a king of its own. A century ago most of it belonged to ethnologically related Siam. I have already mentioned that this greatest division of French Indo-China, about as large and of much the same shape as Italy, has fewer inhabitants than Detroit. This is largely because it was so often sacked, and its people killed by the Chinese, who wanted the land, or carried off by the Siamese to populate her sparsely settled regions along Menam."

23: Franck--331
116, 101, 567

T-2

(1924) 1926

Laotians
Ethnic subgroup

"The Kha are a hill people who made complete submission to the former rulers of Luang Prabang, admitting themselves slaves, and now they accept the present monarch as king and are loyal to him, lending help of this kind upon royal demand, though one could not hire them as carriers in the ordinary way."

"I trust that the reader has not confounded Laos with Luang Prabang, which is merely the largest and most western division of it, its lone king decidedly subordinate to this lean and competent Frenchman whose palatial Résidence I had occupied in Vientiane. Besides Luang Prabang and the 5^{me} Territoire that goes with it, and spacious Tran-ninh of Xieng Khuang, there are half a dozen other divisions in this sparsely settled territory ruled over by my déjeuner host across the plain board camp-table."

25: Brodrick--91 S-3

(1939) 1948

Laotians

116, 101, 619

"The Laos hate being so called; they, as the Shans, the Siamese and the Thos, profess themselves Thais, but the Laos name is one given by neighbours, and the French when they came to know and to govern the land of the Laos, called it just 'Laos.' Therefore, another designation had to be found for the people, so the bastard term, Laotians, was coined and it has now become classic."

"It is said that of the Laotian-speakers more than half live in eastern Siam and not in the Laos, but the Siamese distinguish the two sorts of Laotians as Lao Pong Dam, or Black Belly Lao, and Lao Pong Kao, or White Belly Lao, that is to say, their own Lao who are tattooed and the Laotians of Laos who are not, at least not to the same extent. But even the Laotians of Laos are generally tattooed, though the tattooing is confined to the men. [95]

There are, here and there, traces of tattooing in several parts of Indo-China, but the Laotians are the only civilized people to have preserved the custom. It is clear that the Laotians are connected with the Thai-speaking peoples who extend still up into the Chinese provinces of Yunnan and Kwanghsi, and also probably with the non-Thai-speaking peoples known under a variety of names and making up the medley of population in northern Tongking and northern Laos--Yaos, Meos, Kaws, Lus and others. And nearly all these peoples share the same general characteristics of cheerful contentment, kind-heartedness and love of laughter and music. And they are all tattooed."

28: Crawford -219-220
116, 101, 131, 563

G-3

(1821) 1830

Laotians
Ethnic subgroups

"The Kariang, the Lawá, the Ká, and the Chong, are wild and migratory races. The first and second of these are the same people who inhabit various portions of the Burman dominions. They are confined to the mountainous parts of Lao. The Ká, a term which in the [220] Siamese language means slave, but who are called by the Kambojans, Panong, inhabit the mountains of Lao, bordering upon Kamboja."

"Were they not restrained by fear of the Siamese, and their horror of the jungles so prolific of death, this principality [HD: i. e. Luang Prabang] would soon fall into the hands of the Annamites, who now dare not advance nearer than seven days' journey off. A beautiful stream, 100 metres wide, unites [138] with the great river to the north-east of the town, and leads to some Laotian and savage villages bearing the name of Fie. These are no other than the tribes called Penoms by the Cambodians, Khu by the Siamese, and Moi by the Annamites, --all words simply signifying 'savages.'

The whole chain of mountains which extends from the north of Tonquin to the south of Cochin China, about 100 miles north of Saigon, is inhabited by this primitive people, divided into tribes speaking different dialects, but whose manners and customs are the same. All the villages in the immediate neighbourhood are tributary; those nearest to the town supply workmen for buildings erected for the king and princes, and these are heavily taxed. Others pay their tribute in rice.

Their habitations are in the thickest parts of the forests, where they only can find a path. Their cultivated grounds are to be seen on the tops and sides of the mountains; in fact, they employ the same means as wild animals to escape from their enemies, and to preserve that liberty and independence which are to them, as to all God's creatures, their supreme good.

68: Mouhot--137-138
116, 101, 361, 643, 651

N-5

(1858-61) 1864

Laotians-2

Yesterday, and the day previous, I was presented to the princes who govern this little state, and who bear the title of kings. I know not why, but they displayed for my benefit all they could devise of pomp and splendour."

/I/ PREFACE

All that we know of the origin of the peoples of the Thai race 114
and of their political and social evolution has formed the object of 101
laborious research and fragmentary studies which are set forth in
works of which the reader will find a list at the end of this volume.

Taken all in all, our knowledge is quite limited, and the his-
tory of the Laotian populations is still rather obscure and little
known if we compare it to that of the other races which inhabit the
Indo-Chinese peninsula. We possess abundant documentation on
the Annamese, the Chams and the Khmers, and on their migrations
and conquests, their arts and industries and the monuments which
they have erected throughout the ages. But we have a great deal
less information regarding the tribes, some of which tradition repre-
sents as having come from the /ii/ southern provinces of China and
the others from the Malayo-Polynesian archipelagos, and which
fixed their habitat at an undetermined date in the territories which
today we call French Laos and Siamese Laos.

The explorations of Mouhot, of Francis Garnier, of Doudart 114
de Lagrée and of the Pavie mission, and the labors of the École
française d'Extrême-Orient as well as those of eminent Indianists
and Sinologists, have largely cleared a terrain which was covered
by a thick vegetation of legends and fabulous traditions and have
provided precious data on the principal events of which Laos has
been the theater since the time when the mythical epoch came to
a close, that is to say since the second half of the fourteenth century.

No work of synthesis had, however, been undertaken to estab-
lish the connection between events and the chain of happenings
since that time when the Thai races came out of legend to enter
into history. There were many scattered works of high value on
the language, religion, mores and social status of the Laotian
tribes, and on the upheavals and political crises which so profound-
ly troubled these populations which were almost constantly torn by
/iii/ dynastic struggles or at war with neighboring tribes. But
there were no connections between these essential events, and the
tie which binds them was often broken. A crepuscular veil, if
not a dark night, enveloped the national life of the Laotian
principalities and the chronology of their sovereigns for many
periods.

In a word, there was no complete and precise account of the
history of the country over which France has exercised a protecto-
rate since 1893.

/9/ CHAPTER II
ETHNOGRAPHIC OUTLINE
PREHISTORIC HYPOTHESES

Laos is a geographical expression which does not correspond to any ethnographic reality. To be sure, within the last thirty years it has taken a place in the French Indo-Chinese Union, it possesses an administrative life all its own, and a political status, although vague, which does not resemble that of any other country. But if one wishes to trace the main lines of its history, or more exactly to study the succession of peoples' migrations which resulted in the swarm of races which inhabit it today, one must abstract it from its present political limits and situate it in the whole of the Indo-Chinese peninsula. Its river frontier has, in fact, never constituted a genuine barrier in the west, for the basin of the Mékong is separated from that of the Ménam only by slight undulations. Thus the Laotian on the left bank and the Siamese on /10/ the right bank resemble one another like brothers. /101/

The great obstacle is in the east. It is constituted by the Annamitic Chain which has divided the Indo-Chinese peninsula, from the point of view of race, religion and civilization, into two distinct sides: the eastern slope, which is the domain of the Annamites, a people of Mongol civilization; and the western slope which is occupied by Laos, Cambodia, Siam and Burma, "the abandoned rear guard of the peoples of Indo-European civilization" (1). I
L
174
101
/144/

1. Cf. R. Meyer, Notice ethnographique.

Between these two ethnic zones "the antithesis is more striking than between the Germanic World and the Latin World. The one, the Chinese zone, contains the yellow, impenetrable world whose fabulous past has imposed on the people of Annam, crushed down as they are in their coastal plains, the sacred prestige of its 'characters' which are to it what Pali and Sanskrit are to the races of Hindu origin, and Latin and Greek are to European peoples. The other, the Indian zone, has nurtured the slow evolution of the gentlest peoples of the earth and favored the blossoming of the

I prodigious Hindu civilization" (2).

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2. Ibid.

/11/ We should not, however, conclude from these premises that the Annamitic Chain has always constituted an insurmountable barrier and that these two worlds which are so dissimilar never communicated with one another. On the contrary, they had quite frequent and extremely violent encounters which partially explain the kind of Tower of Babel which the basin of the Mékong forms today.

"Long ago," as J. Moura has judiciously written in his *Royaume du Cambodge*, "Indo-China was the closed field where the civilizations of India and China and doubtless too those of the peoples of central Asia came to try themselves and do battle with one another. These Mongol and Tibetan migrations must have occurred before the Christian era and must correspond to the time when internal wars devastated these regions and resulted in an overflow of the peoples of the North towards the Occident, the Orient, and probably too towards the South. In resume, it may be said that Indo-China was once the theater of political struggles, the land of confusion of religious ideas and mixture of races. The difficulties which we have encountered in all our studies, in seeking a solution to the problems relative to this region, have no other cause."

I /12/ Which was the truly aboriginal race in Laos? No one can
L say, and at the very most all we can do is to suggest the hypothesis
172 that the first inhabitants must have settled there at a time when present-day Indo-China did not yet exist, geologically speaking, and when a relatively large part of the Asiatic lands was covered by water. The interesting collections obtained in Luang-Prabang by Massie and Lefèvre-Pontalis in the course of their explorations in behalf of the Pavie missions show us instruments and weapons of the Polished Stone Age and the Bronze Age. "There existed, therefore, during this prehistoric epoch in the basin of the northern Mékong, human beings who had the same way of life, the same tools and the same methods of work as our own ancestors in old Gaul" (1). This

1. Cf. L. de Reinach, op. cit. /Le Laos, 1911/

period, however, must have lasted much longer in the peninsula than in Europe, if we are to believe the "Imperial Annals of Annam" according to which bronze was still in use in the second century B.C.

The Thais. The Thais came down from their Yunnanese L
 mountains following the annexation of their country (Nan-Tchao) S
 to the Mongol Empire, that is to say, after 1253. Noteworthy 101
 for their capacity for assimilation, they had long been infiltrating 175*
 peacefully among their neighbors. The comparison has been made
 between a flood and "the march of this singular race which, sup-
 ple and fluid like water, insinuating itself with the same force,
 taking the color of all skies and the shape of all banks but retain-
 ing in its diverse guises the essential identity of its character and
 language, spread out like an immense sheet over southern China,
 Tonkin, Laos, Siam and as far as Burma and Assam" (1).

1. Cf. L. Finot (quoted by G. Maspero, *ibid.* /Un empire colonial français: l'Indochine/, p. 33)

"The Thais are spoken of," asserts Théodore Guignard (2)

2. Cf. Note géographique, historique et ethnographique.
 (Introduction to his Laotian-French dictionary, Imprimerie
 de Nazareth, Hong Kong, 1912.)

moreover, "as already occupying Yunnan and the region of the Two Kouangs more than two thousand years before Christ, but these /28/ were probably only resting places. . . . It was doubtless under the compulsion of that instinct in all races which takes them from the north to the south. . . and perhaps also under the influence of common misfortunes, epidemics, wars or famines, or as a result of important climatic changes, that the great Thai race, which was to divide into multiple ramifications, undertook these successive migrations.

"Its role in these remote ages was not without splendor nor without glory, and it was perhaps one of the first policed races in the world. In any case, it had already organized and founded kingdoms at a time when many of the Occidental peoples were still complete barbarians. . .

"Of these kingdoms, one was formed by the eastern Thais. . . who mixed with the Chinese of the Two Kouangs or the Annamites of Tonkin. . . the others were inhabited by the western Thais, whose migrations formed all the Laotian principalities of the banks of the Mékong, the Shan States and later the kingdom of

L Siam and also populated a part of Burma. The eastern Thais under-
S went the influence of Chinese and Annamite civilization, and the
175* western Thais chiefly and in large part accepted the civilizing in-
● 101 fluence of India. "

/29/ Thais of the Ménam. As a result of this scattering the race included many groups, types or varieties, the main representatives of which today are: the Phou-Laos or Laotians, the Phou-Eunes, the Phou-Thais (themselves subdivided into Thais-Khao, Thais-Dam, Thais-Deng and Thais-Neua), the Youns and the Lus. It was a Lu chieftain named Mangrai who, around 1262, brought the region of Xieng-Sen under his authority, founded the city of Xieng-Rai, conquered the kingdom of Haripunjaya (Lampoun) from the Mons in 1290-1292 and founded Xieng-Mai (Lan-Na). From a campaign which he waged all the way into Burma he brought back bonzes from Ceylon who converted his people to the Buddhist faith. To the south of Xieng-Mai a second state was formed in Sukhothai (the Syam of Cambodian inscriptions) by Rorajaja, whose son Rama-Khameng (1283-1297) drove the Kmers out of the valley of the Ménam and formed a vast kingdom at their expense which stretched from Luang-Prabang to Ligor (Çri Dharmarajanagara) and from Vientiane to Pégou. But it was not until approximately 1350 that a prince of the Xieng-Rai family achieved true Siamese unity by founding, on the domain of the old Dvaravati, the new capital Ayuthya /30/ "which was to remain the metropolis of Siam for four centuries" (1).

1. Cf. R. Grousset, op. cit. /Histoire de l'Extrême-Orient/, pp. 590-591, after G. Coedès, "Documents sur la dynastie de Sukhodaya." (B.E.F.E.O. 1917, Vol II.)

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CHAPTER V

THE LAOTIAN PRINCIPALITIES FROM 1707 TO 1836

Political situation of the Indo-Chinese peninsula at the dawn of 175^o the eighteenth century. As of the date which we have now reached, the political map of the Indo-Chinese peninsula had undergone profound modifications in the last three hundred years if we consider the limits assigned to the various Thai kingdoms which issued forth from Khoun-Borom's partitioning. Under the impulse of dynastic ambitions, the latter tried in their turn to dominate their neighbors, and the most fortunate among them became surrounded with vassal principalities which, so to speak, served the purpose of buffer states and passed from one hand to another according to the whims of fortune.

Lan-Xang had had its life. Having lost its independence and its⁶³³ unity, it was to disappear as a state which was the embodiment of 175^o great and powerful suzerainty and which had long been solidly based in the Mekong valley on the traditional alliance /138/ with the Kmer kingdom, then in full decline itself, and the Siamese and Annamites were to divide the spoils.

Tran-Ninh, which had endured the Laotian protectorate with 636 impatience ever since Soulligna's expedition, was to profit by the 648^o circumstances in order to enter into open struggle with the kings of Vientiane. The latter would still be strong enough for another century to extract payment of their tribute by means of repeated expeditions, but the result of these perpetual hostilities would be to throw the princes of Xieng Khouang into the arms of the Annamite suzerain, who was to impose the most severe of dominations on them.

The Burmese empire was no more than a glorious memory. The 175^o land of the Irrawaddy, unified in the eleventh century, disjointed 101 in the thirteenth and regrouped in the sixteenth by Bureng-Naung, had since the conqueror's death again been divided into two enemy kingdoms, Burma in the north and Pegou in the south. With the same language, the same civilization and subject to the same influences, the two twin States were all the more eager to combat one another and no one could possibly have foreseen the end of this long duel even at the very moment (1710) when the Burmese hero Alompra was born, who was to reimpose unity and fill the peninsula with the clash of his arms in his turn.

175*
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/139/ Lan-Na (Xieng-Mai and its dependencies of Xieng-Khong and Muong-Nan), an age-old battlefield and crossroads of all the Burmese, Laotian and Siamese expeditions, lived in permanent dread of new conflicts, and its princes owed their continued existence only to the multitude of competitors who vied with one another for an alliance with them.

The former Dai-co-Viet had given way to the kingdom of Annam, which was in full expansion to the south.

The lords of Hue had accomplished their conquest of the Chams. They had settled at Phan-Ri (1692), had gained a foothold in Cochinchina and had driven the Cambodians from Saigon (1698). Finally, their influence had crossed the mountains in the east ever since their troops had entered victorious with Ong-Hue into Vientiane, which was henceforth to owe them the tribute of vassaldom.

As for the Siamese of Ayuthya, who were favored by the accessibility of their territory to the sea and hardened by the desperate battles which they had waged for their existence, they were solidly established in the whole lower basin of the Menam. After striking a mortal blow at the power of Angkor and shaking off the Burmese yoke, they experienced an era of remarkable prosperity all through the seventeenth century. Encouraged by their kings, they formed /140/ trade relations abroad, particularly with Europe, and were the first in the peninsula to undergo Western influence.

Their capital became covered with palaces, princely residences, vast gardens and sumptuous temples in the number of more than three hundred. The many travel accounts which have come down to us all mention the considerable growth of Ayuthya, which spread at this time over an island "seven leagues around." Wide, straight paved streets crossed numerous quarters which were peopled with Europeans, Malays, Chinese, Japanese, Hindus and even Pegouans. Vaulted bridges made of brick crossed the natural canals criss-crossing the city, which has justly been called the Venice of the Far East. The Dutch had a large trading office there which was supplied by their largest vessels. Across from them, on the opposite bank, the "camp" of Portuguese half-breeds formed a compact agglomeration. The strictly Siamese quarter was immense. Animated by a host of artisans and shopkeepers, it stretched around large squares which served as markets (1).

1. Cf. Nicolas Gervaise (1680) and Commandant E. Lunet de la Jonquiere, *Le Siam et les Siamois*.

- 000 If death had not placed a brutal term on his wanderings a few weeks later, the serious Mouhot might also have been the first man to question the impassive Buddhas on the mysterious past of this remote land, felt the infinite charm of its melodious nights when the khenes give voice to their moving chords, and -- who can say? -- sung the grace of the pretty girls with bare and gilded breasts who in their carefree way weave multicolored scarves under their flowered huts.
- 105 He contents himself with noting rapidly: "Fortunately this is not like Siam, and I can get help from the natives. . . . The /225/ Laotians are peaceable, submissive, patient, sober, trusting, credulous, superstitious, faithful, simple and naive. They naturally /685/ hold robbery in horror. The story is told that one of their kings had thieves fried in a cauldron of boiling oil, but since the ravages of the last wars a certain number of thieves are beginning to be found among them who have been driven to rapine by poverty or by the spirit of vengeance.
- /685/ "Besides cultivating rice and maize the Laotians grow batatas, /241/ gourds, red peppers, melons and other vegetables. . . . They sell /438/ the Chinese ivory and pelts from tigers and wild animals. They /434/ also trade gold dust, silver and copper ore, gamboge, cardamom, lac, wax, dyeing wood, cotton, silk and all the products of their soil for heavy porcelain, small glassware and other small commodities of Chinese industry.
- "The Laotians are not made for war. Ever since the beginning they have been subjected to the neighboring kings, and have never been able to shake off this heavy yoke.
- /101/ "They seem to be more industrious than the Siamese and to possess more of the spirit of adventure and trade. Although both peoples /226/ have many points of resemblance, both physical and moral, the Laotians can nevertheless be distinguished by their dialect and especially by their customs, which are simpler and more amiable.
- 533 "... Their music is very sweet, harmonious and sentimental.
101 Only three people are needed to make a melodious concert. One plays a bamboo organ, the second sings romances with the accent of a man inspired, and the third strikes strips of a sonorous wood together in rhythm, the clicking sounds of which have a striking effect" (1).

judgment which he pronounced in October 1858 on Siamese 533
music, in connection with a dramatic presentation at the 101
court of Bangkok: "Deafening music served as the overture
to the play. The orchestra distinguished itself by a dreadful
racket and a complete absence of harmony... the same
musical phrase was played to us for five full hours by the
clock, to the great content of the king and his court-sans.
I can almost believe that the whole science of music in
Siam is limited to this terrible melody, for the other
presentations which I was condemned to attend elsewhere
always used these unique and discordant notes. "

He left Luang-Prabang on August 9 to continue his entomo- 000
logical research in the valley of the Nam-Khane. The fifteenth,
"on a splendid night," he camped on the bank of the river, but no
matter how "charming" the countryside seemed he felt "sad, pensive
and unhappy." "I /227/ miss my native soil. I should like a
little life. The continued solitude weighs on me."

On September 3 he reached the village of Na-Le where he
killed a tigress and went on a rhinoceros hunt. He was recalled to
Luang-Prabang on the 18th by an order of the "Senate" (he does not
say why) and turned back on October 15, but after three days of
march he had to stop for he was stricken by a violent access of fever.
On the 29th he traced this supreme exclamation in the log of his
route with a trembling hand: "Have pity on me, O my God! . . ."
On November 7 he fell into a coma which was intermittently broken
by delirium, and on the 10th he passed away about seven o'clock
in the evening.

His remains were buried on the following day, "in accordance 114
with the European ceremony," by his faithful servants Phrai and
Dong. Three months later the latter brought back his collections,
his effects and his papers, together with their account of their
master's last moments, to the French consul in Bangkok (1).

1. Cf. the Ferdinand de Lanoye edition, published by
Librairie Hachette et Cie., 1882.

Mouhot's tomb (1867). The pious homage deserved by this 000
precursor, this hardy pioneer who fell victim to his devotion to
science, was paid to him in April 1867 by the leader of the expedi-
tion to explore the Mekong which was organized /228/ by Admiral

648* occupy, by force if necessary (2), the posts "improperly" held by the
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2. However, the governor general of Indo-China "recommended avoiding joining battle, insofar as possible. It was essential," he said, "to seek to gain the inhabitants' sympathy and always to prefer diplomacy and peaceful means to uncertain engagements." (Cf. L. de Reinach, *op. cit.* /Le Laos (Posthumous edition), Paris, 1911. /, p. 16.)

Siamese as far as the left bank of the Mekong. The first column, under the command of Vice-resident Bastard and Captain Thoreux, had Stung-Treng and Khone as its objectives. The second, led by Dufrenil the resident of Dong-Hoi, who was seconded by the militia inspector Claude Garnier, crossed the ridge of Ai-Lao and advanced towards Muong-Phine. The third, which was placed under Luce, the resident of Vinh, and under Inspector Groscurin, was given Cammon as its theater of operations.

By setting the farthest limit of its occupation at the bed of the great river, the /308/ French government clearly indicated its intention to regard the Mekong as constituting the natural line of
/133
101/ separation between Siam and French Indo-China. Now throughout the ages, as we have seen, the Laotian principalities' territory had always extended over both banks, and over the whole of its course the Mekong had established close age-old ties "between the folk on the banks." The simplified formula of the "Mekong frontier" was therefore arbitrary and singularly incorrect, but no matter how many objections Pavie raised in this connection it was always retained because it seemed the clearest and most alluring solution to our interminable boundary difficulties.

The Dufrenil-Garnier column accomplished its mission without any untoward incident. In scarcely a month it had covered three hundred kilometers and was able on May 26 to force the eight Siamese garrisons, which had cut all the roads all the way from Ai-Lao, back to the banks of the Mekong opposite Kemmarat.

At Khone, on the other hand, after first withdrawing before the forces of Captain Thoreux without putting up the least resistance, the Siamese suddenly returned to the offensive, seized the captain, who was taking an unescorted convoy from Stung-Treng to Khone, by surprise and /309/ invested the outpost which Lieutenant Pourchot was defending. The island was not freed until July.

[1]

[Illustration here]

CHAPTER I

175
• 101
642
468 THE POLITICAL STATUS OF LAOS FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY TO THE CAPTURE OF VIEN-TIANE IN 1827

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the territories situated in the basin of the Mékong River were designated by the name of Laos or Lao, and from the political point of view formed two autonomous States.

Their autonomy was much more apparent than real, and existed in fact only for the internal administration of the two kingdoms. As far as their foreign relations went, they were tributaries of the more powerful nations which surrounded them.

The kingdom of Luang-Prabang (or Lan-Xang--of the million elephants) was the northernmost of the two and bordered on Yunnan, Tonkin, Annam, Vien-Tiane (or Vieng-Chang), the Burmese States [2] (or Sib-Song-Pahn-Na) and the You-Eun States (or Lao-Xieng). It was supposed to provide China, Annam and Siam, either annually or every three years, with tribute consisting of certain valuable products and of precious metals, and called "Gold and silver flowers."

The other, or kingdom of Vien-Tiane, was the southernmost and was bordered on the north by Luang-Prabang, on the east by Annam, on the south by Cambodia and on the west by Siam. It was the tributary of Annam and Siam in the same right and under the same conditions as the first.

This state of affairs was profoundly modified in the beginning and middle of the nineteenth century by various events of capital importance.

175
648
726 At the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth the Thai kingdom, or Siam, had often appealed to the Laotian princes for help in repulsing Burmese invasions or repressing the insurrections of Ngileous, Shans and You-Euns which were frequent at this time. The princes' devotion was ill rewarded. Around 1825, in fact, when the kingdom of Vien-Tiane seemed to want to shake off Siamese suzerainty, it saw its territory invaded by Siamese armies. After two years of war the land had been dismembered, depopulated

This is doubtless due to the use of the brush, which does not make it possible to draw characters as fine and as purely rounded as with a dry point, a wooden stylus, a pen or a pencil, which are the only instruments used to write the other varieties of the Thai language.

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Phouthai, like Laotian, is written in characters, but these differ in number and in form. The vowels are intercalated between the consonants, or are placed like accents above the line when the consonant stands alone, or may even always be placed above in the case of some vowels. This way of understanding the use of vowels can also be found in certain primitive languages.

[101]

In the regions where Phouthai writing is used the influence of the proximity of Annam and China has clearly manifested itself, and the alphabet has become syllabic. Scholars are able to learn by heart a certain number of syllables in which consonants and vowels are joined to form a single character, but those who have not learned Laotian cannot distinguish between the vowels and consonants nor use them separately.

The Phouthais, who have the same basic spoken language as the Laotians but who have a different writing and religion, must either have separated from the primitive groupings before writing was created and have attained sufficient cohesion to create their own form of writing, or else must have learned it in a perfected state of development through some foreign current. It may also be said that when the Laotians adopted the Buddhist religion they lost their old Phouthai signs and took over those of the bonzes who had come to teach them the new faith. Then the brush was abandoned for the stylus and the point, which make it possible to write more rapidly and finely and to form a greater number of signs--these being necessary, moreover, to express and define the abstract ideas and subtle dogmas of the new religion.

[177
795]

[142] The Phouthai alphabet includes only twenty-three characters, almost all of which are syllabic.

The Siamese language. Of all the forms of the Thai language, Siamese, as we have seen, is the most complete and the most highly developed. Thus it will perhaps be of interest to give some notion, as rapidly as possible, of this language.

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The alphabet is composed of forty-four letters which are divided into three classes, as follows:

- 11 letters on a rising tone, or high letters;
- 9 letters on a middle tone, or recto tono middle letters;

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To dream of a woman and be awakened by the dream.

To covet the property of others.

To speak profanely of earth, wind, fire, water or anything whatsoever.

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Ordained bonzes, like novices and students, shave their heads, eyebrows and beards carefully and repeat this operation every two weeks. Their clothing, which is the same for all and is of a uniform yellow color obtained by means of a jackwood dye, consists of a sarong, a kind of very full skirt which is worn folded in pleats and extends from the waist to the ground, and which is held in at the waist by a narrow sash. A half-tunic passing under one arm is attached to the opposite shoulder, and is split on one side. The whole garment is kept in place by a sash worn crosswise, and is covered with a kind of toga in the antique manner which is severely draped.

Ordained bonzes wear in addition a piece of pleated cloth on the left shoulder on which sacred characters and various formulas are inscribed.

Bonzes obey a code which was brought to them from India together with the sacred books, and a part of which has been quoted above.

The code requires that their clothing should not be made of one piece of cloth which is whole and of full width, but that it be made of unmatched pieces sewn together. Since the code does not in any way specify the nature of the cloth, one sees bonzes' garments [164] of silk and velvet as well as of cotton and flannel, depending on the generosity of the donors.

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Failure to keep the vow of chastity is very severely punished. The guilty person is marched through the village or city and seated backwards on a horse or carried on a wattle while a minor functionary proclaims the fault committed aloud and beats on a gong. Children and even adults utter hoots and throw filth at the guilty party and his female accomplice, who follows a few steps behind him. When he gets back to the pagoda the bonze is degraded from his rank and then handed over to the civil authorities if there are any grounds for so doing (1).

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(1) This custom has fallen into disuse. Faults committed by bonzes are treated much more indulgently in Laos than in Cambodia.

(Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in
Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

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Besides these major holidays there are a certain number of others which are more religious than secular in character and which fall in between the ones dealt with above.

In the course of the sixth month (April-May), for example, a religious holiday is celebrated in memory of the first leaders of the Buddhist religion.

At the end of the eleventh month, on a date which is fixed in accordance with the rites and which varies from one year to another, a celebration takes place in the pagodas in honor of the men who first introduced Buddhism into Indo-China.

Finally, after the twelfth month (November or December), comes the feast of penitence which applies to all the faithful. During a [174] kind of Lent which lasts for nine days, true believers must abstain from certain foods and from all sex relations.

[785]

Since our establishment in Laos the province capitals and all the centers where Europeans live have celebrated the National Holiday on July 14 which the natives call Boun-Phi-Falang-Sete (Holiday of the French Genie) or, by onomatopoeia, Boun Ka-Tor-Yu-Yet. [C. A. M. Translator's note. The latter term seems to be an approximation of the French Quatorze juillet ("July 14").]

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527

MORES AND CUSTOMS

By reason of their diverse origins and the relations into which they have entered with neighboring peoples, as well as by the cross-breeding which has taken place, the races of Laos necessarily have characteristics, costumes, dwellings and, in a word, mores and customs which differ to a greater or less extent from one race to another (1).

101 •

(1) On this question of mores and customs we shall have recourse from time to time to a notice entitled Le Laos français which was written by the Superior Resident in Laos and based on reports and local monographs which were provided by our administrators and are in consequence authoritative.

[114]

If we have consistently reproduced here extracts from the above work, this is because they provide an admirable summation

Tribal Tai

619
361 The Neua-Thais. The Neua-Thais differ very little, in all respects, from their fellows. They generally live on higher ground than the other Thais, but they change the location of their village quite frequently. [241] [Illustration] [242] [Blank page] [243]

291 The women knot their skirts under their armpits, above their breasts, and always wear a very short jacket made of cotton, silk or velvet, depending on the season,

231 They engage in sericulture, and with the silk spin and weave brocaded cloth with harmonious colors.

779 At the same time as ancestor worship, the Neu-Thais practice an attenuated form of Buddhism. Pagodas are rare and the bonzes, few in number, serve several centers in turn,

461
276 Their character is docile. They do not have a very marked taste for trade and are content to be excellent farmers and livestock breeders. Unfortunately, they are inclined to be opium smokers. This is doubtless due to the proximity of the Meos and Yaos who are the producers of the drug.

619
101 The Phou-Eunes. This branch of the Thai family is very close to the Laotians in mores and customs.

There are only a few modifications in costume and language, modifications due to the age-old proximity of the Annamites and the continuous relations which have existed between the two peoples.

[438] These latter may be explained by the fact that the territory long inhabited by the Phou-Eunes in the east and southeast of Tran-Ninh is situated on the Tonkin Gulf side, and that their produce naturally flows towards the ports on the Annamite coast (1).

(1) To be sure, there are several groupings of Phou-Eunes in the Mekong basin, in Tran-Ninh, to the northeast of Vien-Tiane and in Camkeut-Cammon,

361 The Phou-Eunes prefer to live in high valleys and on high plateaus where the climate is quite severe during the winter. They are more reserved in character than the Laotians, more industrious and less inclined to celebrations and festivities of all kinds.

779 Their religion is Buddhism, but the bonzes are less numerous than elsewhere. It is probable that the little taste which Phou-Eunes have for the religious life is due to the influence of nearby Annam, where the bonzes are a long way from being venerated and coddled as they are in Laos.

Laotians AM8
Tribal Tai

Men's and women's clothing varies little in [244] form from that of the Thais. Under their jacket, however, the women wear a breast-cloth attached to the neck and waist by cords, like the Annamite and Tonkinese women. 291

The Lus. Two centuries or so ago the Lus, who also belong to the Thai race, used to live in the "Shan states" between the Salouen and the Nam-Hon, where they were surrounded by a drifting population composed of Burmese, Kunes, Ngieous, etc. [Illustration alongside text here.] 619 175

Following emigrations, they came to Laos and formed two distinct agglomerations.

Some Lu families have settled in the course of this century on the territory of Luang-Prabang. Today these Lus form villages composed exclusively of people of their race, but live on good terms with the Laotians, whose language and customs they have adopted. [563]

In the old Lu kingdom of Muong-Sing, on the other hand, this people has retained its habits, that is to say its character and temperament are like those of the Burmese. 101

There the Lu is boastful, full of arrogance, a braggart and insolent, but a little firmness is enough to humble his pride. [105]

Lus have a clear complexion, delicate features, keen eyes and a swinging stride. The men are generally tattooed from the calf of the leg to above the navel, and they also have tattoos on their chest, [245] neck, shoulders and arms which are generally red and in the shape of squares with rounded corners. They have long hair rolled in a coil on top or slightly to one side of the head. This coil is wrapped in an enormous turban which they wear tilted over one ear. Many of them have a moustache. This they train upwards, a trait which gives them a conquering air, and to keep it up they smear it with wax. [Illustration alongside text here] 142 304 302

The men's costume consists of a pair of full trousers and a short jacket buttoned along the side. It is made of cotton and is dark blue, almost black, in color. The bottoms of the trousers, the edges of the jacket, the cuffs of the sleeves and the armholes are ornamented with three galloons (blue, white and red) which are quite narrow. Their holiday clothes are often made of silk in varied colors. 291

The women wind their hair into a heavy coil on top of the head and on the side of the coil they place a broad circular plaque of chased silver. They wear skirts like the Laotian women, but the stripes are very broad, run crosswise and are in bright colors. They [302] [301]

Laotians AM8
Tribal Tai
Kha

291 The men's costume is like that of the Laotians. A few, however, have adopted the Burmese costume, turban and all, in which case they let their hair grow and roll it in a coil instead of having a brush cut.

[302]
[301] The women wear a very long skirt with broad stripes running across it which is fastened beneath the breasts. The bust is covered by a closed jacket or bodice which is cut straight and made of cotton or silk of varied colors. Their hair is rolled in a coil on the nape of the neck or is held in place around the head by a narrow band of cloth and allowed to fall freely down the back. Both sexes wear metal cylinders in their ears, like the Lus, and silver jewelry.

[142] The Youns are more robust than their fellows, and also more industrious. The women are perhaps less pretty than the Laotian women, but they are just as friendly and merry.

276 [251] Both men and women chew betel, and also "Mieng" (green tea, fermented and salted). They smoke tobacco in enormous cigarettes rolled in dried banana leaves. [Illustration alongside text here]

The Youns are primarily farmers and livestock breeders. They excel in breeding and training oxen as draft animals.

212 We have seen that the Youns, although they speak the same language as the Laotians, have their own form of writing which is generally used for religious writings. Their bonzes, who are highly learned for the most part, are renowned for their expert knowledge of the rites of the Buddhist religion.

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101 Marriage, divorce, polygamy, births, funerals, celebrations and festivities are all the same among the Youns as among the Laotians, except for a few minor differences in detail which we need not mention here.

THE KHAS

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181 Before entering into detail about the mores and customs of the main Kha families, we shall again have recourse to the learned work by the Superior Resident in Laos in order to give a general sketch of this race which represents at least a third of the population.

[252] "They are to be found throughout the territory, and are divided into more than sixty families. As much as those who inhabit northern Laos are docile, manageable and respectful, so are those who inhabit the southern part of Laos proud, independent and warlike, particularly the tribes inhabiting the mountains which separate us from Annam.

101 [261] [Illustration] [262] [Blank page] [263] As far as marriages, deaths, etc. go, we find practically the same customs among the Kha tribes of southern Laos as among their fellows in northern Laos.

231 It should be noted that the Rades breed a variety of small horses which are highly prized in Annam, Laos and Siam.

439 "These Khas love music and dancing. Their favorite instruments are gongs and bells.

533 "A set of gongs consists of seven, nine or twelve single ones. Made of copper and often very beautiful, these gongs take the shape of a cylinder from forty to eighty centimeters in diameter, only one end of which is closed by a vibrating plate. The cap worn by our judges and professors, although on a smaller scale, gives a fairly clear idea of the shape of these instruments. A few of the instruments are artfully cast and ornamented with much elegance. There is a solid ring about a third of the way along the gong's length which is part and parcel with the rest of the gong and makes it possible to hang it up on a side of the house, at about the height of a man's head, by means of a rattan thong fastened to the frame.

"The performers stand facing the battery and pummel it with their fists, taking care to strike the vibrating plate in the center so that it will emit a true tone. This procedure produces perfect musical notes, which are accompanied by the dull resonances of the tom-toms and the sharp sonorities of the bells made of a copper and tin alloy. The gongs bring a high price, and when it is a fine one a complete series is worth from 1,200 to 1,500 francs.

"In some villages the performers each take an instrument and hold it in a sling fastened to their shoulder, then form a column in single file. This Indian-style procession marches from the center of the house towards one of its extremities, striking more and more gently as it moves away from its point of departure. Then it returns to the center, unleashing a compensating crescendo. The maneuver begins again towards the other end of the house, and the musical promenade continues until the musicians are exhausted.

535 "When the Khas begin to play and perform the Kimlang (a very stirring war dance) and the warriors grow excited from dancing and 272 from drinking rice wine, it is wise to make them stop as soon as they 579 begin to pick up their weapons, for when drunk with alcohol and enflamed with ardor they are no longer masters of themselves.

714 "War dress includes feathers in the hair and a sort of cross of Saint Andrew formed of cloth rolled and crossed on the chest. Weapons, quivers, arrows, crossbows, bucklers, spears and swords complete their equipment.

Hill Tribes

595

There is polygamy among the Meos, and the Meo women do not enjoy any higher regard than the Kha women.

• [10]

The Yaos. The Yaos have the same origin as the Meos, and are strikingly like them in many respects. Their mores, their beliefs and their habits are identical.

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As we have seen above, the Yaos are divided into three varieties, these being the Lantenes, the Khao and the Ao-Tchaine.

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The Lantenes (blacks) wear broad trousers, a long smock buttoning at the side and a turban, all made of black cottonstuff. They wear their hair long and either wound under a turban or braided in Chinese style.

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[742]

Their houses are like those of the Meos and shelter several families, each of which has its own quarters. They are generally clean and well kept-up.

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The mores of the Lantene Yaos are patriarchal, and these folk are monogamous. The women are very reserved and do not let themselves be seen much by strangers. They enjoy a certain respect and are treated with consideration by their husbands.

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The Lantenes are great livestock breeders, and cultivate the opium poppy in addition to rice and maize. They are skilled hunters of wild animals, and each man owns a rifle from which he is rarely separated.

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Besides a dialect peculiar to them, they speak Quoan-hoa (a Cantonese idiom), and many of them can write Chinese characters.

[198]

The Khao Yaos are less outgoing than their fellows and do not greet strangers with as much good will.

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The men's clothing is like that of the Lantenes, [269] but the women are garbed in a different manner and wear their hair in a special way which has earned their tribe the name "Khao" (horns).

Over a pair of black trousers ornamented with colored embroidery and held in place by leggings, Khao Yao women wear a tunic which comes down to the knees but the flaps of which are fastened to the belt. This tunic also has colored embroidery on the chest, back, neck and cuffs, and is held shut with wide silver hooks.

302

Their hairdress consists of a coil which is smeared with wax and lacquer to hold it in place and in which a wooden socket is imbedded. A light bamboo framework is inserted into the socket, and over this is spread a red cloth or a black cloth embroidered in red. The women thus appear to have two horns on their head.

301

Silver jewelry, neckbands, bracelets and ear pendants are worn by the Khao Yaos.

149: Reinach--264 G-3 (no date) 1901 AMI Indochina
Laotians AM8

the plants are replanted a few centimeters [360] apart in a second seed-garden for growth. This procedure increases the plant's productivity quite appreciably. 243

Since the nature of the terrain and the richness of the soil vary from one point to another, it follows that the yield from the ricefields is not uniform. By reason of these conditions and the varying amount of water which falls on the fields or is piped in, this yield varies from 40 to 90 parts for one part of seed, and from 15 to 25 piculs per hectare (1). The rice is harvested about four or five months after 243 3/2

(1) In Cochinchina the average yield is from 28 to 30 piculs, and in Tonkin 44 piculs. But one should not lose sight of the fact that Cochinchina and Tonkin are much better favored than Laos from the point of view of irrigation, and that the Annamites are past masters in the art of farming. [101] •

transplanting.

2) Terraced ricefields. The soil is worked in the same way in these ricefields, except that in some cases the land is turned over with a spade instead of plowed. 243

3) Mountain rais. In the year following the one when the land was cleared, the soil of the rais is cleaned and weeded. Then in June the rice is sowed, either broadcast or else by dropping a few grains at a time into holes made with a kind of bamboo dibble.

The rais are harvested in October and even in September in some localities. In general the yield from rais is from 90 to 120 parts for one part of seed and from 10 to 20 piculs per hectare.

Maize is sowed directly in straight furrows about March or April, and is harvested in July.

TOBACCO. Tobacco (Ia-Doute) is widely consumed in Laos, where everyone smokes. It is also an excellent commodity for trade and export. It is cultivated on a large scale on the banks and islands of the Mekong from Pak-Lay to a point below Pone-Pissay. Production from the tobacco fields in these regions not only supplies local needs, but also those of all of Upper Laos and part of Lower Laos and provides tobacco for export to Siam and Cochinchina. 249 [439]

[361] In addition to the foregoing, almost the whole population along the banks of the Mekong and the lower reaches of its tributaries also grows tobacco for its own use and for the inhabitants of the interior. The tobacco which is most prized for its high quality, however,

249 either in the natural state or in the form of black, pasty, molasses-laden sugar.

There are several varieties, the chief of which are the heavy, green cane which is highly cellulated, and the small violet-colored cane with joints closer together, which is fuller than the first.

Farming methods do not differ from those used in other countries. Cuttings are planted, and the plants are topped if they show a marked propensity to excessive leafy growth.

257 To manufacture sugar, the cane is crushed between two vertical
407 cylinders driven by two wooden gears of a most ingenious construction. A buffalo turns the whole by means of a crossbar or shaft, the end of which is attached to its neck and constitutes a whim. Sometimes the cane is crushed between two pieces of stone or hardwood, one of which rests on the ground while the other [364] is applied on top of it by means of a wooden lever. One or several persons work the other end of the lever with all their weight and move it up and down in a series of jerky motions. The juice extracted from the cane is placed in large cast iron cauldrons shaped like cupels, which are imported by Chinese merchants. Condensation takes place over an open fire laid in primitive hearths which are cut into the ground itself, if it is clayey. When the syrup reaches the desired degree of thickness the whole mass is poured into rectangular or circular molds made of wood or bamboo. After cooling the loaves of sugar which come from the molds, and which are from three to six centimeters thick, are wrapped in dry leaves. They are transported and sold in this form. The cane itself is called "Oi" and the sugar "Nam-Oi" or, literally, water of cane.

[276] The Laotians do not refine alcohol from the juice of sugar cane,
101 and are even ignorant of the initial refining stage which the Annamites use and which produces brown sugar.

[435] The price of sugar on the markets of Laos varies from one point to another, and transactions involve small quantities only. Statistics do give evidence, however, from which market prices of 35 to 50 francs per hundred kilograms can be deduced.

249 INDIGO. We have seen above that the Laotians use the indigo-bearing properties of certain plants which grow wild in the forests in order to dye cloth goods blue. They also produce a variety of indigo, the *Indigofera tinctoria*, which is similar to the variety found in Bengal. The plant itself is called "Kok-Kame" and the extract or dye "Nam-Kame".

516 progresses at an even, elongated pace, carrying as much as 30 kilo-
 417 grams in his pack without even seeming to suspect the feats of strength,
 [132] suppleness and balance which he accomplishes. As long as he remains
 on high ground his resistance to fatigue is very great indeed, but he
 cannot go down to the lowlands without danger, especially in the hot
 season.

101 Certain authors claim that the word "Meo" which, when pronounce
 with a certain intonation, means cat in several Indo-Chinese languages.
 was given to these folk by reason of their agility. However, we must
 note that in [109] Laotian the word "Meo" used to designate these
 mountainfolk is neither written or pronounced like the word meo
 which is used to designate cats. There is the same difference between
 these two words as there is in French between the words maitre and
 metre.

342 A Meo house is built at ground level on slightly leveled ground.
 The walls are made of puddled clay or of ill-fitting boards, and the
 house is roofed with thatch or crudely-squared wooden shingles. The
 doors are made of wood which has been shaped with an ax, and there
 [592] are no windows. Often several families live in the same house, and
 then each has a fireplace to itself and a compartment which serves
 it as a bedroom. In the common room there is an oven and fireplaces
 above which objects are placed to dry on a bamboo framework.
 Behind the house a narrow passageway is left free separating the
 [343] building from the sheer mountainside. In front there is a narrow
 veranda where the horses are kept when they are not housed in a
 stable built on piles and overhanging the mountainside, as are the
 animal barn and pig sty, the rice granary and the goat pen. This
 system has the advantage of protecting the animals from the dampness
 of the ground, since the planks which form the floor jut out over
 empty space on their solid piles.

[101] Inside the house there are a few furnishings, as among all peoples
 of Chinese origin. There are benches, tables, camp beds, dishes,
 352 iron and copper cooking utensils and opium smoking accessories, all
 358 so repulsively filthy that even the least delicate would hesitate to
 enter and stay in these hovels, where vermin swarm under the pro-
 tection of the ancestors' altar.

198 Although among themselves and with their families the Meos
 212 speak a rather unharmonious language, nearly all the men can under-
 stand and speak Qouane-hoa, the language of the Chinese mandarins,
 which is the official language in Yunnan. They can neither read nor
 write Chinese characters, and have no system of writing of their own.

forms of Buddhism: the Mahayana or Great Vehicle, and the Hinayana or Little Vehicle. "One must beware of contrasting too violently the two Vehicles, as is often done. They were held together by many and subtle bonds." However in our days a Laotian Hinayanist and a Mongol Mahayanist have nothing in common.

Roughly, the essential difference between the two doctrines is that Hinayana considers the Buddha not as a superior man but as a man, while Mahayana deified Sakyamuni, who, without being a god, was as much as or more than a deity. Activity, formerly condemned, is glorified, sanctified on condition that it is freed from personal interests and is used for the salvation of others. Individual salvation has absolute value only if it contributes to universal salvation. The nirvana of the Hinayanist must be denounced as a scandalous exaltation of self. Bodhi, the supreme knowledge which makes Buddhas, is accessible to all beings. The saint is the Bodhisattva, who is on the point of reaching nirvana, yet remains during periods of incalculable successive existences to save [22] souls. The Mahayanist universe, which has grown immeasurably is filled with an infinite multitude of Buddhas. Many Bodhisattva exist: the principal ones are Avalokitesvara, Maitreya, Manjousri, Vajrapani, etc. Besides, each Buddha and each Bodhisattva has been doubled by a dhyanibuddha, a contemplative Buddha (spiritual Buddha). To the belief in nirvana proclaimed by the Hinayana, the Mahayanists add an infinite series of paradises, the "pure Grounds" (this notion is Iranian) where souls saved by the grace of the Bodhisattva are born again in the symbolical lotus.

Mahayana now flourishes in central Asia, in Tibet, China, Japan and in Vietnam, was in vogue in Java, and in the ancient Khmer empire from the ninth to the thirteenth century. Its influence is found in certain sculptures of Luang Prabang (see appendix). Hinayana is practised at the present time in Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Cambodia and Laos.

Introduction of Buddhism to Laos.

According to certain documents, Buddhism was introduced to Laos by Buddhaghosa. This legend is too popular in other Buddhist countries of the Indochinese peninsula for it to be given any credit here. Laotian tradition tells us that Fa Ngoum had a mission come from Cambodia which brought not only the sacred books of orthodox Buddhism but also Brahmanic texts whose traces can still be found today. This tradition, which offers greater proofs than the legend, fixed the date of the introduction of Buddhism to Luang Prabang in

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"The prince heir to the throne Mugapakkha remained dumb until he was thirteen years old. He recovers his speech at the moment when his father wants to bury him alive. He then explains his previous silence by showing that an inconsiderate word may be the cause of great torment in future existences for him who has uttered it." And the Sama Jataka:

"Sama who fed his father and mother, who were both blind, dies of a wound inflicted unintentionally by king Kua who was deer hunting. As Sama is dying, he entrusts his murderer to break the news to his parents, who lament so painfully that Sakkha is moved and brings Sama back to life."

But of all, the most popular is unquestionably the Pha Vet, the Laotian name for the Vessantara Jataka. (Cf. below Boun Pha Vet).

There exists another series of Jatakas which rival the five hundred Jatakas in popularity. It is the Pannasajataka (Ha Sip Xat) or the fifty

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Jatakas. This very peculiar text is found in [29] all the literature of western Indochina, and was probably composed in Thai country. Versions exist in Burmese, Khmer, Siamese and Laotian. The Laotian rendition has the peculiarity of containing 27 out of 50 tales which are not found in any other version. These 27 stories are entirely original. They are at the moment in the process of being translated.

Finally the five hundred Laotian Jatakas form a convenient framework into which all kinds of stories in the current language have been inserted. Their study will doubtless prove a mine of information on local folklore.

THE PHI

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We cannot conclude the chapter relating to the religion of Laos without mentioning the cult of the Phi.

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In his books "La Participation" and "L'Evolution humaine" the late lamented Jean Przyluski distinguished three successive phases of religion which, according to him, are related to an economic and social state.

When man is a collector of food, that is, when he lives from what he can gather or hunt or fish, his religion is vegetalism or totemism. When he becomes a producer, man's religion becomes agrarian, honoring the gods of vegetation, of the earth, the forests, etc., and particularly the protecting genie of the village. Finally, in the period of urban communities, universal gods appear.

While some reservations might be made on this classification, it does nevertheless offer a convenient framework in which we can

538 these tales were spread throughout the world in an extraordinary way.
 101 They penetrated many literatures by [80] word of mouth or in writing.
 But at first the means of propagation was a Pahlavi version made at the request of the Sassanid king Khosroes Anoshirvan (531-579). From this version a first Syriac translation and an Arabic transcription were made. The work became very widespread throughout the whole of Islamic literature. At the beginning of his sixth book, La Fontaine says that he has drawn the subject of a large number of his fables from those of the Indian sage Pilpay (doubtless Vidyapati), but the material was furnished to him through an Arab intermediary of the eighth century, Kalila-wa-Dimna. Finally, it should be remembered that the prologue forming the framework of "The Thousand and One Nights" is found in the Pancatantra.

The same thing happened to this text in the Far East. It is found in Java, Siam, Cambodia and Vietnam. At Vientiane it exists under the name of Mulla Tantai. This collection is unknown at Luang Prabang, but the text is found in a collection of five works called Pakon. In the first four books only tales of a similar character are grouped in a common framework. The fifth is merely a series of comments on the texts of the Vinaya and has no relationship with the Pancatantra.

These works are compiled under a uniform plan: a subject being discussed, each person who takes part in the debate expresses his opinion and bases it on a story (Finot).

The story begins with the prologue forming the framework:

"There was once a king who, while walking one day in his park, saw a young married woman who pleased him. He ordered his minister to bring him every evening a young virgin of good family under pain of death for him and his family. After some time there remained in the town only a single maiden, the daughter of the minister Nang Tantai (the Laotian Scheherazade). [81] They had to lead her to the king, but she was cautious and reassured her parents as to her fate."

It is well known how the king, charmed by the tales told by this young girl, married Nang Tantai who became queen.

b) The Ramayana. The extraordinary popularity in Asia of this Indian epic is proved by the many versions of it one finds: Chinese, Tibetan, Javanese, Malayan, Vietnamese, Khmer, Siamese, etc.

The Laotian version was somewhat neglected until recent years, because it was supposed to be only a copy or translation of the Khmer text or the Siamese version. We have undertaken to study it, and it

538 shows us, on the contrary, that this is a profoundly different text,
101 differing not only from the two lessons already quoted but also from
that of Valmiki which is the source of inspiration of all the others.

Because of the newness of the problem, it would be at least premature to indicate now the origins of the Laotian text and to establish its relationship to other known versions. Therefore we will limit ourselves to recalling the essential part of the poem of Valmiki and to stating what we learn from the Laotian version.

538 The Ramayana of Valmiki. The story of Rama, son of the king of Ayodhya, takes place mostly in India. Persecuted by a jealous stepmother, the young prince and his wife Sita are exiled. He is accompanied by his brother Lakshmana. Attracted by Sita's beauty, Ravana, King of Lanka (Ceylon), carries her off after removing Rama and Lakshmana who pursue a golden gazelle which the king has created by magic. Thanks to his alliance with Sugriva, King of the Monkeys, Rama sends the monkey Hanuman as a messenger to Sita, then attacks Lanka. He kills Ravana and wins back his wife. But the latter is [82] suspected of being unfaithful and submits to ordeal by fire. Rama then brings her to Ayodhya.

The Pra Lak Pra Lam (Laotian Ramayana). Nang Canda, daughter of Dacaratha, king of Candapurisattanagamahanagara (Vientiane) was carried away by Ravana, son of King Indrapattanagara. Dacaratha begs the god Indra to give him a son capable of killing Ravana. Indra sends his own son Pra Lam (Rama) who, with the aid of his brother, brings Nang Canda back to Vientiane.

Ravana is exiled by his father, King of Indrapattanagara and settles at Lanka. Having risen to the paradise of Indra, he takes advantage of the latter's lack of attention to violate a woman of the harem. This woman asks permission to avenge herself. She goes down to earth and becomes the daughter of Ravana. She attempts to kill him, but he exiles her. She is abandoned on a junk and rescued by a hermit who adopts her. The fame of Sita's beauty reaches Rama, who decides to go and marry her. Ravana, no longer remembering that she is his daughter, becomes the rival of Rama. But as Rama is the only one able to lift the magic bow of the hermit, he becomes Sita's husband. At this point comes the episode of the golden gazelle and the carrying away of Sita. Rama pursues his wife, but he is turned into a monkey for three years, because of his wicked karma (Cf. the Buddhist doctrine). He has a son Hanuman. Having taken back his human shape and with the help of Lakshmana, Hanuman, and the army of monkeys, he attacks Lanka, kills Ravana and brings Sita back to Vientiane.

000 Vientiane.

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As can be seen, there is a certain originality in the Laotian text. Only the episodes of the golden gazelle, the abduction of Sita and the attack on Lanka are similar to those of the Valmiki poem. In addition the scene is laid in Laos. All the ceremonies are Laotian and many explanations are given of [83] its origin and the creation of numerous muongs, particularly those of the region between Khong and Vientiane. Northern Laos, on the contrary, is seldom mentioned.

Romances

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There are two kinds, in verse and in prose. As is mentioned by Louis Finot, from whom we borrow the whole passage quoted below, the Laotians have a marked preference for long stories of adventure relieved by their pleasant rhythm. However, neither the actors nor the events of the drama shine by their variety; the characters can be reduced to a small number of types:

1st. The hero. He is naturally a young prince. Naturally, too, he is handsome and in love, but he is a lover who takes no pride in reserve or in fidelity. He merrily takes advantage of every occasion and usually comes back with five or six women whom he has collected by the way. When necessary he lies unscrupulously. He fights and wins, but with the help of magic weapons, which diminishes the merit of his exploits. To increase his dignity, the story-teller gives him the title of bodhisattva which becomes him as little as possible.

2nd. The Rishi. This is a hermit magician. He instructs the hero in occult arts and provides his equipment, a flying horse, miraculous weapons, etc. He also collects abandoned young girls who appear in the nick of time to become the mistresses or wives of the young prince.

3rd. The Yak. This is the enemy of the hero. He also possesses all kinds of magic powers, he flies through the air, takes different shapes, fights with enchanted weapons. He is violent, irascible, voracious and libidinous. He is sometimes good-natured and may become a faithful servant when he has been beaten mercilessly.

[84] 4th. The father-in-law. This is a king from whom his daughter is taken without consulting him. He is constantly furious, grotesque and scoffed at.

5th. Indra. He is the god ex machina. He comes to the aid of compromising situations and sends water at the opportune moment which saves those who are dead. Like a well-trained servant

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There is no scenery. The costumes and headdresses vary according to the characters represented. The masks of colored lacquer worn by the actors, their accessories (weapons, scarves, etc.) being traditional and invariable enable the fictitious characters on the stage to be identified.

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The theatre of animated shadows, similar to the shadow theatre of China and Java, tends to disappear little by little.

Laotian Decoration.

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Laotian decoration is characterized by a somewhat mannered elegance which can be noticed in the motifs of the pagoda doors and windows. The Laotian artisan is, however, endowed with an extremely well developed artistic sense, but the present day demands do not enable him any longer to live by his handiwork, and the importation of manufactured articles tends to make the artist disappear. /89/ He can only survive by royal patronage. The royal palace for this reason shelters sculptors on wood and ivory as well as goldsmiths, but their produce is not sold and the tourist will hardly be able to bring back with him typical Laotian objects.

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However, the weaving of silk materials of divers shades, often laminated with gold or silver, is still done on a sufficient scale to satisfy the passing tourist.

The Sin

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This is a skirt reaching from the hips to the ankles. It is of a rather somber color with a design of vertical stripes very close together and not very evident. This skirt is decorated on its lower edge with a flat trimming of two or three rows of gold or silver braid. At the top of the skirt a belt of red cloth, more or less embroidered, relieves the rather dark tone. This garment is a regular cylinder having the same width on its entire length. When the woman emerges from her bath she lifts her skirt, gathered into the shape of a crown, above her head and lets it slide down the length of her body. She fixes it without hooks or fasteners to her belt by means of a turned in pleat tied in front leaving most of her belly exposed. A bright colored scarf of cotton or silk thrown over one shoulder and completely covering the breasts completes the costume. The most beautiful scarves come from Samneua, Luang Prabang and Khong. The jewelry most frequently seen consists of silver bracelets, necklaces and buttons, rings, long crossed over chains /chaines-sautoirs/, flat clasps, and belts usually of silver but sometimes of gold.